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The Fundamental Role of Brand Experience in Building Brand Loyalty Behind The Everlasting Success of Taylor Swift

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Abstract

Eighteen years into her career, Taylor Swift remains a significant figure in the music industry, with her popularity extending globally, including in Indonesia. The rising popularity of Swiftie activities, such as karaoke parties, fun walks, and Eras Tour remakes, driven by her viral songs and TikTok trends, demonstrates the deep engagement of Indonesian Swifties who invest considerable time and money in Taylor Swift-related events, both locally and abroad. This research explores how brand experience drives brand loyalty and examines the roles of brand experience, brand personality, brand satisfaction, and brand love in sustaining Taylor Swift's success in Indonesia. Utilizing a mixed-method approach with judgmental sampling to obtain credible insights, interviews with 11 respondents and surveys with 305 respondents from 16 regions in Indonesia were conducted. Data analysis was performed using NVivo for qualitative coding and PLS-SEM with SmartPLS for quantitative examination. The study identifies several factors contributing to Taylor Swift's sustained success and exposure, emphasizing her exceptional brand experience, public persona, market understanding, and emotional connection with fans. The findings reveal that brand experience, satisfaction, and love significantly and positively influence brand loyalty. Brand experience impacts brand loyalty directly and indirectly through brand personality, satisfaction, and love as mediating variables. Perceived quality also significantly enhances brand satisfaction, which positively affects brand trust. These insights provide valuable guidance for artists and record labels aiming to enhance brand management strategies and boost brand loyalty, thereby extending artist longevity. This study also contributes to the broader knowledge of brand management in the music industry.

Keywords: Taylor Swift, Brand Experience, Brand Loyalty, Music Industry.

A. INTRODUCTION

Since her debut, Taylor Swift has consistently provided her fans with immersive experiences, including relatable music, theatrical performances, and direct fan interactions. This dedication has fueled the continuous growth of her brand over an impressive 18-year career, maintaining her relevance and expanding her loyal fanbase. Previous studies have established that brand experience contributes to brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Santos & Schlesinger, 2021), which may also apply to Swift's brand. Swift's commitment to producing high-quality music and her growing fandom has garnered numerous accolades, including Grammy Awards, being named Time's "Person of The Year" (Lansky, 2023), and landing on Forbes' billionaire list in 2024 solely from her music endeavors (Mercuri, 2024). Her "The Eras Tour" was also declared the highest-grossing tour in history (Millman, 2023).

Taylor Swift's massive popularity extends globally, including Indonesia, where viral songs, TikTok trends, and Swiftie events like karaoke parties and fun walks highlight her dedicated fanbase. Indonesian Swifties are willing to invest significant time and money in Taylor Swift-related activities, from local fan events to traveling abroad for her concerts. Despite her widespread appeal, research on the factors behind Taylor Swift's enduring success, particularly in Indonesia, remains limited. This study explores how brand experience contributes to building brand loyalty amid the massive hype and long-lasting success of Taylor Swift. Specifically, it examines the influence of brand experience, personality, satisfaction, and love on Taylor Swift's brand loyalty.

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Literature Review

Brand experience is consumers' subjective responses triggered by specific brand-related experiential attributes (Brakus et al., 2009). It includes four dimensions: sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral. When consumers perceive value for money when purchasing an album or attending a concert, they are more likely to reuse the brand, attend future concerts, share positive word-of-mouth, and become loyal fans (Cole, 2012). Previous research indicates that brand experience significantly and positively impacts brand personality, satisfaction, love, and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Kwong & Candinegara, 2014; Liang, 2022; Omar, 2020; Santos & Schlesinger, 2021).

Brand personality allows businesses to create unique brand positions in the customers' minds, enhancing brand equity (Helmi et al., 2019). Consumers often choose brands that align with their personalities when purchasing, favoring those that best reflect their traits (Tuzcuoğlu et al., 2018). (Tsiotsou, 2012) brand personality is categorized into authenticity, credibility, competitiveness, morality, and prestige. Studies claimed that personality significantly affects brand satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009; Kwong & Candinegara, 2014; Marković et al., 2022).

Brand satisfaction refers to consumers' emotional response to their experience of purchasing a specific product or service (Marinković & Senić, 2013). According to (Rizwan et al., 2014), satisfaction is evaluating how well a consumer's needs or desires are met compared to their expectations. Satisfied customers are likelier to repeat purchases and willingly promote the brand to others (Leninkumar, 2017). Brand satisfaction significantly influences brand love and loyalty (Cuong, 2020; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021; Moreira et al., 2017).

Brand love is a satisfied consumer's intense emotional attachment to a specific brand (Ahuvia, 2005). This includes dimensions of affection and connection, commitment, consumer-brand identification, brand relationship, and passion-driven behaviors (Pontinha & Coelho do Vale, 2020). As the relationship deepens, a consumer's passionate affection for a brand develops into love (Loureiro et al., 2012). Previous studies have shown that brand love significantly impacts brand loyalty (Cuong, 2020; Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021; Santos & Schlesinger, 2021).

Brand loyalty is regarded as the highest level of the consumer-brand relationship (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). A loyal customer is considered highly valuable to the brand (Rensburg & Slabbert, 2019). In the context of artist brands, loyalty can be understood as devotee-based brand equity (Keller, 2008), characterized by the consumer's attitudes and behaviors towards the artist.

Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

Based on the previous studies, nine hypotheses were constructed to be tested in this research:

- H1: Brand Experience (BE) significantly and positively affects the Brand Personality (BP) of Taylor Swift
- H2: Brand Experience (BE) significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction (BS) of Taylor Swift
- H3: Brand Experience (BE) significantly and positively affects Brand Love (BLo) of Taylor Swift
- H4: Brand Experience (BE) significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty (BLt) of Taylor Swift
- H5: Brand Personality (BP) significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction (BS) of Taylor Swift
- H6: Brand Personality (BP) significantly and positively affects the Brand Loyalty (BLt) of Taylor Swift
- H7: Brand Satisfaction (BS) significantly and positively affects Brand Love (BLo) of Taylor Swift
- H8: Brand Satisfaction (BS) significantly and positively affects the Brand Loyalty (BLt) of Taylor Swift
- H9: Brand Love (BLo) significantly and positively affects the Brand Loyalty (BLt) of Taylor Swift

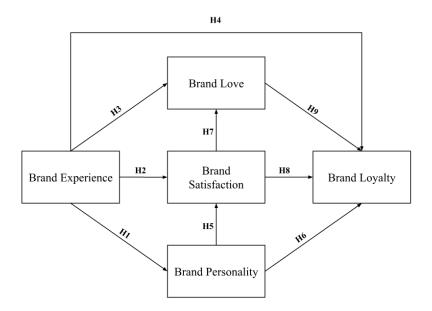


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure an in-depth and comprehensive analysis. The qualitative approach was the initial step in data collection, utilizing semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions such as "why" and "how" to generate insights (Tenny et al., 2024). The objective was to gather experiences, perspectives, and behaviors of participants meeting the following criteria: Millennial and Gen Z Indonesian Swifties who stay updated about Taylor Swift and her music, actively participate in her events, and have been fans for over five years. A judgmental sampling method was used to select 10-15 respondents, continuing until data saturation was achieved. The interview data were analyzed through open and selective coding using NVivo.

Following the qualitative phase, a quantitative approach was employed using a survey questionnaire. Participants responded to predetermined questions presented in a set order, using a Likert scale from 1 to 5 to indicate their level of agreement (Malhotra et al., 2017). This phase aimed to identify patterns, outcomes, or potential causal relationships between variables (Fleetwood, n.d.). The survey targeted Millennial and Gen Z Indonesian Swifties who stay updated about Taylor Swift and her music and actively participate in her events. Judgmental sampling was again used, with a minimum sample size of 200 respondents (Dash & Paul, 2021). The quantitative data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS.

C. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Qualitative Analysis

From the interviews with 11 respondents, the findings showed that there are several factors contributing to the success of Taylor Swift and to the fans' loyalty, which are first, the immersive brand experience Swift offers: sensory, affective, cognitive; and behavioral experiences, from listening to her music, watching her concerts and performances, directly engaging with her and the fandom, to solving "easter eggs" riddles, which is Swift's experiential promotion strategy for her newly released music. Secondly, Swift's relatable, humble, and authentic public persona, reinforced by the emotional engagement Swift builds through her lyrics, relatable stories, and interactive approach, fosters a strong personal

connection with fans. These added to Swift's understanding of market demand and fan expectations, generating satisfaction and love among the fans, which further led to loyalty.

Additional variables were also found from the interviews, such as perceived quality and brand trust, which contribute to building satisfaction among the fans. Swift's consistent excellence in her music, from the well-conceived album eras to the high productivity in releasing new albums, leads to the fans' satisfaction, further cultivating their trust in Swift. This research focuses on perceived service quality, emphasizing the intangible aspects of Taylor Swift's brand experience and her music rather than the tangible elements. According to (Slack et al., 2020; Subar et al., 2020), perceived service quality has a significantly positive impact on satisfaction. (Ratnawati and Kholis, 2019; Boonlertvanich, 2019) further suggested that satisfaction will eventually influence trust, strengthening the customer-provider relationship. Therefore, the updated hypothesis and conceptual framework are presented below.

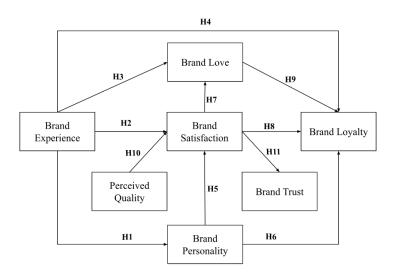


Figure 2. Updated Conceptual Framework

H10: Perceived Quality (PQ) significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction (BS) of Taylor Swift H11: Brand Satisfaction (BS) significantly and positively affects Brand Trust (BT) of Taylor Swift Source: research data, 2024

Quantitative Analysis

The author managed to collect data from 305 respondents. After analyzing the convergent validity, indicator reliability, internal consistency, discriminant validity, and collinearity of the variables, all of which were valid, the author conducted hypothesis testing through PLS-Algorithm calculation in the SmartPLS. The results of the hypothesis are as follows.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Result				
Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value	Result
H1	0.681	6.778	0.000	Accepted
H2	0.199	2.468	0.014	Accepted
H3	0.391	5.413	0.000	Accepted
H4	0.135	2.163	0.031	Accepted
H5	0.329	5.409	0.000	Accepted
Н6	0.026	0.398	0.691	Rejected
H7	0.392	5.884	0.000	Accepted
Н8	0.256	3.411	0.001	Accepted
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Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Value	Result
H9	0.488	9.624	0.000	Accepted
H10	0.391	6.837	0.000	Accepted
H11	0.811	28.388	0.000	Accepted

Source: reserach data, 2024

According to (Wong, 2013), a structural path must have T-statistics over 1.96 and a P-value of less than 0.05 to be significant. Meanwhile, a path coefficient scored near +1 and -1 indicates a strong positive and negative relationship, respectively (Hair et al. 2019). Based on this, all the hypotheses showed a positive relationship between the variables. The results showed that 10 out of 11 hypotheses were accepted. Hypothesis 6, "Brand Personality significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty," was rejected since it did not meet the requirements of T-statistics over 1.96 and a P-value below 0.05. Furthermore, the author also conducted a mediation test of the mediating variables: Brand Personality, Brand Satisfaction, and Brand Love. This aims to see whether there are mediating effects between the variables.

Table 2. Mediation Testing on Brand Personality (BP)

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	Structural Path	T-Value	P-Value	Result
Step 1	$BE \to BLt$	8.599	0.000	Significant
Step 2	$BE \to BP$	7.292	0.000	Significant
Step 3	$BP \rightarrow BLt$	2.834	0.005	Significant

Source: reserach data, 2024

Table 3. Mediation Testing on Brand Satisfaction (BS)

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	Structural Path	T-Value	P-Value	Result
Step 1	$BE \to BLt$	8.599	0.000	Significant
	$PQ \rightarrow BT$	7.008	0.000	Significant
Step 2	$BE \rightarrow BS$	7.292	0.000	Significant
	$PQ \rightarrow BS$	7.674	0.000	Significant
Step 3	$BS \rightarrow BLt$	2.834	0.005	Significant
	$BS \rightarrow BT$	27.999	0.000	Significant

Source: reserach data, 2024

Table 4. Mediation Testing on Brand Love (BL)

	Structural Path	T-Value	P-Value	Result
Step 1	$BE \to BLt$	8.599	0.000	Significant
Step 2	$BE \rightarrow BLo$	12.614	0.000	Significant
Step 3	$BLo \rightarrow BLt$	9.093	0.000	Significant

Source: reserach data, 2024

From the mediation test of all the mediating variables that followed the steps in the research by (Abdillah and Hartono, 2015), it can be seen that the results of all the steps were significant. The effects from the independent to dependent variables, independent to mediating variables, and mediating to dependent variables are all significant. This indicates that Brand Personality, Brand Satisfaction, and Brand Love have partial mediating effects. Brand Experience affects brand loyalty directly and indirectly and is mediated partially by brand personality, satisfaction, and love. Perceived quality indirectly affects brand trust, mediated partially by brand satisfaction.

Discussion

H1: Brand Experience significantly and positively affects the Brand Personality of Taylor Swift

The results showed that brand experience has a significant positive influence on brand personality. This can be seen from the T-statistics of 6.778 and P-value of 0.000, which surpassed the requirements and supported the hypothesis. It is aligned with (Brakus et al., 2009; Kwong and Candinegara, 2014; Omar, 2020), who stated that brand experience significantly influences brand personality. The interview also supports the fact that fans tend to associate Swift with certain personalities based on the experiences they got from her brand, such as associating Swift as a relatable person due to the sense of validation they got while listening to Swift's music.

H2: Brand Experience significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction of Taylor Swift

The findings demonstrated that brand experience also has a significant positive influence on brand satisfaction, supported by the results that the T-statistics is 2.468 and the P-value is 0.014, which aligns with the requirements. This is consistent with the research from (Brakus et al., 2009; Kwong and Candinegara, 2014; Liang, 2022; Moreira et al., 2017), who suggested that brand experience significantly influences brand satisfaction. The interview results also revealed that due to experiencing Swift's music, concerts, and the Swiftie community, the fans' satisfaction towards the artist increases, which means it also supports the hypothesis.

H3: Brand Experience significantly and positively affects Brand Love of Taylor Swift

The data further showed that brand experience significantly influences brand love, supported by the T-statistics result of 5.413 and P-value of 0.000; therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. This is in line with the previous research by (Santos and Schlesinger, 2021), who stated that brand experience directly and positively influences brand love. The interviews also revealed that most fans' emotional attachment to Swift grows from being able to experience Swift's music and connect with it on a personal level. They found the overall Swift musical experience rewarding, leading to their affection and love towards the artist, which indicates that the hypothesis is supported.

H4: Brand Experience significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty of Taylor Swift

The results showed that brand experience significantly and positively influences brand loyalty. Tstatistics of 2.163 and P-value of 0.031 aligned with the requirements, supporting the hypothesis. This also aligns with the previous studies from (Moreira et al., 2017; Santos and Schlesinger, 2021), who suggested that brand experience positively affects brand loyalty. The interviews revealed that Taylor Swift's brand experience led to fans' loyalty, evident in their constant music streaming and willingness to attend her concerts. This loyalty is rooted in the positive experiences that the fans got from Swift, indicating that the hypothesis is supported.

H5: Brand Personality significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction of Taylor Swift

Based on the results, brand personality has a significant and positive effect on brand satisfaction, as shown by the T-statistics of 5.409 and P-value of 0.000, surpassing the acceptance requirements; hence, the hypothesis is accepted. This is consistent with theories by (Brakus et al., 2009; Kwong and Candinegara, 2014; Marković et al., 2022), who stated that brand personality influences brand satisfaction significantly. The interviews also supported this finding, showing that Taylor Swift owns personalities that align with the fans' values, which leads to their satisfaction. They frequently mentioned that Swift often exceeds their expectations with her dedication and commitment to satisfy her audience.

H6: Brand Personality significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty of Taylor Swift

On the contrary, the results showed that brand personality does not significantly and positively influence brand loyalty. The data showed that the T-statistics is 0.398 and the P-value is 0.691, indicating that it does not meet any requirements; therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. This result does not align with the previous studies by (Brakus et al., 2009; Marković et al., 2022), who suggested that brand personality affects brand loyalty significantly and positively. From the interviews, it can also be inferred that Swift's brand personality does not directly influence loyalty alone, but with experience as the precedent, it partially mediates the development of loyalty.

H7: Brand Satisfaction significantly and positively affects Brand Love of Taylor Swift

The findings demonstrated that brand satisfaction does have a significant and positive impact on brand love. This is supported by the T-statistics (5.884) and P-value (0.000) results, which passed the requirements and thus accepted the hypothesis. This aligns with the research from (Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2021; Cuong, 2022), who stated that brand satisfaction positively influences brand love. The interviews further supported this finding, in which, due to the fans' favorable assessment of Swift's music, a deep affection and love towards the artist emerged. The brand love resulted from the fans' consistent satisfaction with Swift.

H8: Brand Satisfaction significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty of Taylor Swift

Brand satisfaction is also found to affect brand loyalty significantly and positively. With T-statistics of 3.411 and P-value of 0.001, the hypothesis is accepted. This finding is consistent with studies from (Moreira et al., 2017; Cuong, 2020), who suggested that brand satisfaction affects brand loyalty positively. Besides this, the interviews also revealed that Swift often exceeds fans' expectations, which increases their satisfaction and strengthens their commitment and loyalty towards Swift; hence, the hypothesis is supported.

H9: Brand Love significantly and positively affects Brand Loyalty of Taylor Swift

Furthermore, the results showed that brand love significantly and positively influences brand loyalty. This is supported by the T-statistics of 9.624 and P-value of 0.000, which fulfilled the requirements and indicated that the hypothesis was accepted. This result aligns with previous studies by (Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh, 2021; Santos and Schlesinger, 2021; Cuong, 2022) who claimed that brand love directly and positively affects brand loyalty. The interviews showed that Swift and her music allowed the fans to connect with her emotionally, increasing the love they felt towards Swift, which further leads to the strong commitment and loyalty to support the artist, indicating that it supports the hypothesis.

H10: Perceived Quality significantly and positively affects Brand Satisfaction of Taylor Swift

Additionally, perceived quality is found to influence brand satisfaction significantly and positively. The data showed that the hypothesis was accepted with a T-statistic of 6.837 and a P-value of 0.000 since both values met all the requirements. This is in line with earlier studies by (Slack et al., 2020; Subar et al., 2020), who stated that perceived service quality has a significant and positive impact on satisfaction. The interview results also support this finding, highlighting that the fans are satisfied with Swift because of the overall quality Swift presents in all aspects of her musical experience offered to the fans, from songs and albums to performances.

H11: Brand Satisfaction significantly and positively affects Brand Trust in Taylor Swift

Lastly, the findings also demonstrated that brand satisfaction has a significant positive influence on brand trust. The results of T-statistics 28.388 and P-value 0.000 fulfilled all requirements, showing that the hypothesis is accepted. This is consistent with previous research by (Boonlertvanich, 2019; Ratnawati and Kholis, 2019; Subar et al., 2020), who suggested that satisfaction influences trust and strengthens the customer-provider relationship through trust. The interviews imply that the fans trust Taylor Swift and her music quality because of her positive past experiences, which results in their satisfaction. This satisfaction is the cause of their trust in Swift's brand, supporting the hypothesis.

D. CONCLUSION

This research uncovered several factors that contributed to Taylor Swift's continuous popularity and success, highlighting Swift's immersive brand experience from sensory, affective, cognitive, to behavioral, Swift's public persona, her capacity to understand market demand and expectations, the emotional bond cultivated with her fans, and the steady quality of her music and performances. The results also demonstrated that brand experience, satisfaction, and love significantly and positively influence Taylor Swift's brand loyalty. Brand experience influences brand loyalty directly and indirectly, which is mediated partially by brand personality, satisfaction, and love. Additionally, perceived quality has been proven to have a significant and positive effect on brand satisfaction, while brand satisfaction has a significant and positive effect on brand trust. Perceived quality also influences brand trust indirectly, mediated partially by brand satisfaction. With the help of these findings, artists and record labels can better manage their brands and increase brand loyalty by optimizing the brand experience—all of which will contribute to the longevity of the artists. This study also advances the understanding of brand management in marketing, particularly in the music industry context. For future studies, the author would like to suggest a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between perceived quality and brand loyalty, as well as brand trust and loyalty. Comparative studies between several brands would also provide a better understanding of brand management in the music industry.

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